

**EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION**

TEL: 880-2-883-7150-4

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: [DhakaPA@state.gov](mailto:DhakaPA@state.gov)

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



**REMARKS BY  
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA  
BANGLADESH YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE  
INTERNATIONAL YOUTH ENVIRONMENT MEET 2013  
OPENING CEREMONY  
EMK CENTER, DHAKA  
APRIL 25, 2013**

All Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change and Environment Chairman Saber H. Chowdhury, MP

Bangladesh Youth Environmental Initiative President Shamir Shehab

BYEI General Secretary Syed Muntasir Ridwan

Fellow global citizens who care deeply about preserving our planet

Asalaam ‘malaikum ... and good morning

God was generous in creating the human being.

He gave us lips ... like these ... to speak, hands ... like these ... to do, and a brain to connect the two.

That is our challenge ... to connect the two.

At the nearby Ruposhi Bangla Hotel, global climate change experts and development professionals from around the world are engaged in a four-day conference assessing the intersection of climate change and development from every conceivable angle ... the power point presentations no doubt are dazzling and the words no doubt wise, erudite and plentiful ... and this is good.

Here, today, at the EMK Center, you, young people from Bangladesh, the region and beyond, you will spend the day immersed in your own power point presentations and torrent of words. Since you are more techno-savvy than the old folks over at the hotel, I would guess your presentations will be better. In any case, your endeavors here today are good ... very good.

It is indeed good to meet, to talk, to exchange ideas, to learn from each other's experiences, positive and not, to debate, to disagree, to forge consensus, to push the envelope, to learn, to learn, to learn ...

Such is the value of the get-togethers both here and at the Ruposhi Bangla Hotel.

This is good ... but this is not enough. Words, ideas, understanding are all critical means to an end; they are not the end itself.

Look at these hands ... these enormous hands ... I was not born with hands like this ... these hands are the result of my being born and raised on a dairy farm in the state of Iowa. These hands milked cows twice a day, every day, 365 days a year, year after year; they slopped the hogs, fed the cows, plowed the fields ... such is the work of the hands of a farmer. On a farm, we don't talk about our daily chores; we do them.

I have not changed over the decades. As my colleagues at the Embassy will confirm, I am to this day focused on doing, not just talking.

That is what I like about this International Youth Environmental Meet. You do not content yourselves with simply discussing the challenges of global climate change; you have organized yourselves into an action committee to actually address climate change through joint research and community service projects. I am impressed; I applaud your concrete commitment to making a tangible change.

The world is filled with talkers, those who eat well by working the conference circuit; similarly some countries grandly pronounce commitments to addressing climate change; others sign compacts and agreements with great flourish. But speeches, lavish dinners, grand pronouncements, signed agreements mean little if at the end of the day there is no concrete action undertaken to cope with and mitigate for the effects of global climate change.

You have committed yourselves to taking concrete action to fight global climate change ...  
... and so have I.

"Think global and act local" was our guiding slogan 45 years ago when I was a student activist. I still like that approach.

The Embassy Dhaka Green Team leads the charge to make our embassy more environmentally friendly, and we are on a roll: we've eliminated all Styrofoam and paper cups, trained household staff on reducing water consumption and power usage, introduced our first electric car for our maintenance staff ... we soon will have a fleet of ten, replaced paper towels with electrical hand-dryers in our restrooms, expanded paper recycling, reduced printing documents, and the list goes on.

These changes sound minor ... but these changes are huge ... imagine the impact if every embassy in Dhaka, if every business in Dhaka, if every home in Dhaka practiced these same measures ... what a difference it would make.

Think of the things you can do to act locally: You can organize trash pickups and tree plantings; you can help your young neighbors understand the importance of keeping waterways trash-free and not wasting precious clean water; and you can raise awareness about the benefits of reusable bags instead of plastic bags and buying fuel efficient cook stoves. And all of the other great ideas that are surely to come of the discussion and debate today.

America and Bangladesh are strong partners in combatting the effects of climate change. We partner in so many ways:

- Preserving and sustaining Bangladesh's forests and wetlands, which are essential for protecting the nation from cyclones and floods, by engaging former poachers and abusers of these natural assets as their guardians.
- Developing low emissions development strategies that emphasize energy efficiencies and renewable energy.
- Promoting improved cook stoves that improve energy efficiency while reducing black carbon output
- Introducing innovations in agriculture that reduce greenhouse gases from fertilizers.
- Utilizing saline-, drought-, and flood-tolerant rice varieties.

This list, too, goes on, but I think I have made my point: working together is the key ... working together at the micro level, whether embassy, business or home ... working together at the community level, or state level or national level ... working together is the key ... working together as partners like America and Bangladesh ... working together internationally, as you propose to do ... working together is the key.

I wish you well today as you work together to learn from each other, as you work together to challenge and stretch each other, as you work together to establish an International Committee on Climate Change so you can build on the ideas, understandings, friendships that emerge from this exciting day together. I do indeed wish you well.

Thank you.

=====

*\*As prepared for delivery*